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AUTHOR Talley, Odessa B.
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ABSTRACT

This teaching guide is intended to aid tenth grade English classroom teachers as they develop and implement educational programs on the Igbo-speaking people of Nigeria. The source material for this unit is "Things Fall Apart," by Chinua Achebe. The guide is a product of an interdisciplinary summer workshop for teachers on development of Africa-related curriculum. It is intended as the basis of a minicourse to be taught within 15 class periods of 55 minutes each. Students learn specific facts about the Igbo people, read critically and develop interpretative skills, and compare and contrast the values of American and African cultures. Activities involve students in answering (orally and in writing) discussion and study questions which are presented for each of the 25 chapters of "Things Fall Apart." To answer the questions, students use various basic reading skills, including quick recall, interpretation, and analysis. Also, students compare African and American values and behaviors. Also included in the guide are background and resource bibliographies for teachers and students, objectives, and tips to teachers on how to introduce questions to the class more effectively. (DE)

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"THE IGBO PEOPLE OF NIGERIA AS SEEN THROUGH THINGS FALL APART BY CHINUA ACHEBE"

An Instructional Unit for Tenth Grade English

by

Odessa B. Talley
Central High School
Little Rock, Arkansas

This teaching unit on Africa was developed as part of an interdisciplinary workshop project in African curriculum development held on the University of Illinois' Urbana-Champaign campus in the summer of 1978. The workshop project, which was funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities, was carried out from 1977-80 and was integrated into an on-going program of outreach services offered to teachers nationwide. For further information on teaching aids available through outreach services, contact:

Outreach Director
African Studies Program
1208 West California, #101
Urbana, Illinois 61801

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BRINGING INTO FOCUS THE TRADITIONAL CULTURE OF THE IGBO PEOPLE

Preface Statement

This unit is designed to give students an insight into the culture of the Igbo-speaking people of Nigeria. The source material for this unit is Things Fall Apart by Chinua Achebe. Through a critical reading of this novel, students will learn many facts about the Igbo people--how the Igbo make a living, how they govern themselves, how the family is founded, how the network of kinship functions, and how the Igbo have responded to contact with European culture. With these facts, students will make cross-cultural comparisons thus becoming more perceptive about their own culture as well as that of another one.

Grade Level and Course

This unit is designed for tenth grade English classes that are composed of regular and below regular students.

Time Allotment

It is designed to be taught within fifteen fifty-five (55) minute periods. Ten days will be devoted to reading and discussing the novel, and five days will be devoted to preparing and sharing enrichment activities.

General Objectives

1. To learn specific facts about the Igbo people.
2. To read critically and develop interpretative skills.
3. To compare and contrast the values of our culture with those of another.

Skills

1. Students will be able to integrate the facts about the climate, topography, economy, and culture of a distant land, the people and the texture of their lives.

2. Students will be able to explain how several parts of the culture are related (e.g. marriage and family relations, child rearing and personality structure, etc.)

3. Students will be able to compare and contrast the ideal Igbo male personality with the ideal American male personality.

4. Students will be able to compare and contrast the causes and effects of cultural change in an African and an American society.

5. Students will be able to point out the traits of the Igbo culture that made it particularly susceptible to change as a consequence of contact with European culture.

6. Students will be able to select relevant data on the major structures of Igbo society.

Selected Bibliography

Teachers:

Bohannan, Paul and Phillip Curtin. Africa and Africans. Garden City, New York: The Natural History Press, 1971.

Recommended reading for a simple introduction to traditional societies and African history.

Burke, Fred. Africa. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co. (World Regional Studies)

A general, balanced introduction to the history of Africa, for use at the high school level. Covers African history, from the time of the early civilizations through the demise of colonial rule and problems of nation-building.

Murphy, E. Jefferson. History of African Civilization. New York: Crowell, 1972.

This book is suitable for teachers' background reading. The emphasis is on pre-colonial African history.

Uchendu, Victor C., The Igbo of Southeast Nigeria. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1965.

This case study is written by an Igbo about his own people. It penetrates to the heart of the Igbo culture and social system. Mr. Uchendu shows how the people in Nigerian society think about the world around them and how they conceive of their own social system and its workings.

Students

Ademola, Frances. Reflections: Nigerian Prose and Verse. Lagos: African University Press, 1962.

A good collection of African stories and poems for high school.

Barnes, Gregory. A Wind of Change. New York: Lothrop, Lee, and Shepard, 1968.

This book follows the thoughts of a 16 year-old West African boy who is torn between furthering his education and conforming to traditional values.

Bleeker, Sonia. The Igbo of Biafra. New York: Marrow, 1970.

This book gives a description of Igbo existence from birth to death. It gives essential details on child rearing, market trading, home life, religion, and arts.

Dietz, Betty and Olatunji, M.B. Musical Instruments of Africa. New York: Day, 1965.

A discussion of different kinds of music and their functions in African societies. Includes a record illustrating the instruments described and directions for learning African rhythms.

Forman, Brenda and Harrison. The Land and People of Nigeria. New York: Lippincott, 1964.

The Foremans describe the progress being made toward national unity and toward full realization of Nigeria's rich human and economic potential.

Glubock, Shirley. The Art of Africa. New York: Harper, 1965.

Photographs of well-known types of African art removed from their cultural contexts; accompanied by brief descriptions.

Johnston, Rhoda O., Iyabo of Nigeria. Claremont Graduation School, 1973.

Fictional biography of a Yoruba girl in contemporary Nigeria which contains many realistic details about life from childhood to marriage.

Latchem, Colin. Looking at Nigeria. Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1976.

Social studies survey with striking color photos of contemporary life.

Lumley, Frederick. Nigeria, The Land, Its Art and Its People. London: Studio Vista, 1974.

This book captures the spirit and ethos of a nation--Nigeria, its people and its places. It is a microcosm of different families which make up the teeming population of a country.

Mbiti, John S. African Religions and Philosophies. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1970.

General survey of major questions associated with African religions by a leading authority.

Okofor-Omali, Dilim. A Nigerian Villager in Two Worlds. London: Faber and Faber, 1965.

The author presents an interesting account of Igbo life in the early part of the century in this account of his father's life in an Eastern Nigerian village. The problems in reconciling traditional attitudes to family, education, and customs with the new values brought by the white man are central to the book.

Warren,Lee. The Dance of Africa; an Introduction. Englewood-Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1972.

Different kinds of African dances and occasions when they are performed are described. Directions for learning four dances are included.

Audio-Visual Materials

Film

Omowale: The Child Returns Home

This film is narrated by John A. Williams, the Black American writer who makes a pilgrimage to West Africa in search of his roots. In this film he meets and talks at length with the author Chinua Achebe of Things Fall Apart.

Available from Visual Aids Service, University of Illinois, Champaign, IL 61820

Slidesets

African Food Crops

Cultivating and processing food plants domesticated in Africa such as sorghum, rice, millet, teff, oil palms and kola trees.

Houses in Western and Southern Africa

A brief survey of the diversity of rural and urban housing in five African countries.

Nigeria: A Short Introduction

Daily life in various parts of Nigeria.

All three slidesets are available free of charge from the African Studies Program, University of Illinois, Champaign, IL 61820.

STUDY QUESTIONS FOR THINGS FALL APART, CHINUA ACHEBE

Part I

Chapter 1

1. What is the Igbo idea of success? How does it compare with the American idea of success?
2. Point out the ideal Igbo male qualities as personified in Okonkwo and compare them with the ideal American male qualities.
3. What constitutes wealth in Igbo society? American society?
4. What two things do the Igbo people seem to admire and respect the most? Americans?
5. How does an Igbo man receive a guest in his home?
6. What beliefs are revealed about the Igbo people at the death of Unoka, Okomkwo's father?

Chapter 2

1. What do you learn about Igbo village life from Okonkwo's thoughts as he listened to the town crier?
2. At the market place the next morning, what was the crisis the people of the Umuofia had to face?
3. What traits are revealed about the Igbo people from the manner in which they deal with this crisis?
4. In what ways did the belief in supernatural forces influence the lives of the people?
5. The character of Okonkwo is further delineated in chapter two. What do you learn about Okonkwo from his relationship with the leaders, his wives and children, and his father?
6. Draw a diagram of Okonkwo's compound. (Note pp. 17-18.)

   (Show slides on "Houses in Western and Southern Africa")
7. What status in the village is given to the boy Ikemefuna?
8. How does an Igbofamily differ from an American family? Are there any similarities?

Chapters 3 and 4

1. What special forces govern the lives of the Igbo people?
2. What fear constantly plagues Okonkwo?
3. Compare Okonkwo's rise to fame to Abraham Lincoln's rise to fame?
4. How does the weather control the living standards of the Igbo people?
5. What is the importance of titles in an Igbo man's life?
6. What is Okonkwo's attitude toward less successful men? What in his childhood contributes to this feeling?
7. How is a man judged in Igbo society?
8. What contributes to Ikemefuna's adjustment in his new surroundings?
9. What activities, both work and play, do Okonkwo, Nwoye and Ikemefuna engage in?
10. What is the status of women in an Igbo society?
11. What is the significance of the observance of the Week of Peace?

Chapters 5 and 6

1. Why do the Igbo people celebrate the Feast of the New Yam?
2. When does it take place? How is it celebrated?
3. What holiday in our own country is similar to the Feast of the Yam?
4. What is the function of the ancestors and palm wine in this celebration?
5. What deity seems to play the major role in the lives of the Igbo?
6. Compare the excitement of the crowd before and during a wrestling match in Umuofia to our behavior at sports activities.
7. Describe the crowds reaction to the winner of the match?

Chapters 7 and 8

1. What are Okonkwo's ambition for his son?
2. How has Ikemefuna contributed to Nwaye's growth and maturity?
3. What is Nwaye's reaction to his father's participation in the killing of Ikemefuna?
4. What in Okonkwo's nature forced him to take part in the killing of Ikemefuna although he had been warned not to by one of the elders?
5. How does he rationalize away his guilt feelings?
6. What are the people's reaction to the descent of the locust?
7. How are Obierika and Okonkwo different?
8. Discuss Obierika's ambivalent attitude toward Igbo practices.
9. What do you learn about bride bargaining and bride wealth?
10. In what way is Okonkwo a male chauvinist? Is this the same with American males?
11. How are Igbo children entertained? Explain the dual purpose of this entertainment.
12. Other than being the chief factor in food production, why is land so important in Igbo culture?

Chapter 9

1. What ideal mother-daughter aspects do you see in the relationships between Ekwefi and Ezinna?
2. Discuss Ezinna's special illness and cure.

Chapter 10

1. How does the judicial system work in Igbo culture?
2. What is the role of the ancestral spirits?
3. Discuss the role of brothers in Igbo culture.

3. How does Uncle Uchendu deal with this problem?

4. Assess Uncle Uchendu's character and position in the family unit.

5. Describe the ceremony of confession. What is its significance?

Chapters 15 and 16

1. Discuss Ibo friendship as demonstrated by Obierika.

2. Along with two full bags of cowries, what sad and disturbing news does Obierika bring?

3. Explain the logic of Uncle Uchendu's statement: "The world has no end, and what is good among one people is an abomination with others.

4. From the Umuofians prospective, what kind of people from their village were attracted to the new religion?

5. For what particular reason does Obierika pay a visit to Okonkwo?

6. What feature of the new religion appeals to young Nwaye?

7. What happened in his childhood that caused him to be so receptive to the new religion?

8. What misconceptions on the part of both the Igbo people and the missionaries make it difficult for them to understand each other?

Chapter 17

1. What is ironic about the villagers giving the missionaries land in the Evil Forest?

2. Why are the women particularly attracted to the new religion?

3. What does Oknokwo do that brings about the final breach between him and his son?

4. What aspects of the Igbo culture make it possible for the missionaries to succeed.

Chapters 18 and 19

1. In addition to their religion, what else did the missionaries bring that aided them in their mission?

2. Although Okonkwo has prospered in his motherland and seven years of exile are coming to a close, he still has regrets. What is the major cause of his regret?

3. How is Okonkwo's method of expressing thanks so typical of the "Igbo Way"? Discuss its symbolic significance.

Part III

Chapter 20

1. What are some of the regrets that invade Okonkwo's thoughts as he returns home to Umuofia?

2. What are his expectations?

3. In what way does Ezinma live up to her father's expectations of her?

4. What steps does he take to make sure his other sons will not do as Nwaye?

5. What changes have taken place in Umuofia since Okonkwo left?

6. What has happened to the spirit of the people? What corruptive influence have the colonialists had on the people.

Chapter 21

1. How has the coming of the missionaries aided the Umuofians?

2. Why has Mr. Brown won the respect of the clan?

3. How do Mr. Brown and Akumna differ in their view of God? What are the similarities?

4. How did the establishment of schools aid the missionaries?

Chapter 22

1. How did Mr. Smith differ from Mr. Brown?

2. Discuss the difference in Mr. Smith's approach in dealing with the Igbo people.

3. Discuss the wisdom of the statement made in reference to Mr. Smith. "He does not understand our customs, just as we do not understand his."

4. How was "the spirit of the clan pacified"?

Chapters 23-24

1. Why does Okonkwo feel happiness for the first time in many years?

2. What are the events that lead to the arrest of Okonkwo and the other leaders of Umuofia?

3. What qualities are brought out in the Igbo people by the arrest?

4. Show how the atmosphere created by the writer at the end of Chapter 23 reflects the inhumanity in the treatment Okonkwo and his fellow clansmen experience.

5. Imagine that you are Okonkwo or one of the other prisoners and write your thoughts down in the form of a monologue. What do you feel as you enter the village?

Chapter 25

1. Analyze the last statement made by the Commissioner and show how Achebe uses irony to drive home his overriding theme.

LESSON PLANS
for
THINGS FALL APART, CHINUA ACHEBE

Lesson I

Objective

Students will discover that a piece of literature is a useful source of cultural information.

Teaching Strategy

Ask students if they were to be chosen as a foriegn exchange student, what would be their quickest and most authentic source of information about the country where they were going?

Ask students how they could get the feel of what it is like to live in another country, to experience its culture, observe its inner relationships, to understand its people?

Hopefully, students will name a book. But if they don't, I shall ask if any one has read a book from another land. And if so, what did he learn from the book?

After this discussion, announce to the students:

> Each of you has been selected to be an exchange student to Nigeria. Before you go to live among the Ibo people, I shall give you an opportunity to vicariously experience their culture through the reading of Achebe's Things Fall Apart.

Assignment

Read the first chapter of Things Fall Apart and be prepared to answer the discussion questions.

Materials

Copies of Things Fall Apart and mimeographed copies of study questions.

Lesson II

Objectives

Students will be able to list the things that symbolize Igbo success.

Students will be able to point out the ideal Igbo male qualities in Okonkwo.

Students will be able to name the material things that constitute wealth in Igbo society.

Students will be able to discuss the manner in which an Igbo receives a guest in his home.

Students will be able to discuss the Igbo people's beliefs about death.

Students will be able to make a comparison between Igbo culture and American culture from two perspectives: a. character traits and b. material wealth.

Teaching Strategy

Divide class into six groups and make each group responsible for a written response for one of the six questions on Chapter 1.

Allow 10 minutes for formulation of answers.

Recall small groups. A student from each group will make a report to the entire class.

Allow interaction on question.

Assignment

Divide class into small groups of three to six students and make each group responsible for looking for information on the following topics as they finish the reading of the book:

a. Religion and the Supernatural
b. Social Control and Law
c. Economics and Geographical Conditions
d. Courtship and Marriage
e. Proverbs and Folktales
f. Social and Political Organization
g. Family and Kinship Patterns
h. Child Rearing and Parental Relationship

When the book is completed, the group will be given class time to write a joint report on topic it has been assigned.

The teacher will take these up, duplicate and distribute them to the class.

The teacher and students will check for errors and omissions. If necessary, teacher will ask students to seek further information.

Evaluation

Teacher will base evaluation on the group reports.

Lessons 3 through 8 will follow the same general pattern as Lesson 2. The teacher will vary the handling of the discussion questions to create variety and maintain interest of students.

Additional Strategies

A. Composition Assignments

1. Write a brief character sketch of Okonkwo in which you discuss his positive traits as well as his negative traits.
2. Compare traditional Igbo values with traditional American values.
3. Compare the personalities of Okonkwo and Obierika.
4. Students will give their compositions an appropriate title, and begin composition with an introductory paragraph that has a thesis sentence, stating the central idea and indicating the scope and sequence of the paper.

B. Make a character chart on which you list name of character, relationship to some other character and dominant personality traits.

Example:

CHARACTER IDENTIFICATION CHART

Character	Relationship	Traits
Obierika	Okonkwo's best friend	Kind, sensitive, understanding, loyal

C. Use Resource Persons

1. Nigerian students from Philander Smith
2. Nigerian students from the University of Arkansas at Little Rock
3. Dr. Ruth Patterson, Director of Minority Studies
4. Ms. Maisha Hazzard, Instructor of African-American Studies

D. Enrichment or Creative Activity

Each student will do one or more of the following:

*1. Make a report on African (a demonstration must accompany report)

a. Music
b. Art
c. Clothing
d. Dance
e. Religion
f. Food
g. Folk tales

*A list of resource people will be provided.

2. Construct a traditional African compound.
3. Make a report on land features and climate (maps must accompany report)

E. Investigate another African country or cultural group.

Students will be required to do the following:

1. Select and limit the subject
2. Prepare a working bibliography
3. Write an outline (must formulate a thesis sentence for outline)
4. Gather information
5. Organize information
6. Write the report

F. Read another book by an African author.

Additional Novels for Related Reading

Peter Abraham	MINE BOY	Xhosa - South Africa
Chinua Achebe	A MAN OF THE PEOPLE	Igbo - Nigeria
Chinua Achebe	NO LONGER AT EASE	Igbo - Nigeria
Ferdinana Oyono	BOY (HOUSEBOY)	Ewondo - Cameroon
Camara Laye	THE DARK CHILD	Malinke - Guinea
Ngugi wa'Thiongo	A GRAIN OF WHEAT	Kikuyu - Kenya
James Ngugi	THE RIVER BETWEEN	Kikuyu - Kenya
Okot p'Bitek	SONG OF LAWINO	Acholi - Uganda
Flora Nwapa	EFURU	Igbo - Nigeria
Wole Soyinka	THE INTERPRETERS	Yoruba - Nigeria